

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A shoe press belt (~~11; 21; 31; 41; 51; 61~~) endlessly formed by an elastic material, wherein a plurality of drains (~~15; 25; 35; 45; 55; 65~~) are formed on the outer peripheral surface of said shoe press belt along the peripheral direction of said shoe press belt, and the depths of said drains are progressively increased from a central pressurizing portion (~~C₁; C₂; C₃; C₄; C₅~~) toward end pressurizing portions (~~A₁; A₁'; A₂; A₂'; A₃; A₃'; A₄; A₄'; A₅; A₅'~~) of said shoe press belt.

2. (Currently Amended) The shoe press belt according to claim 1, wherein the depths of said drains (~~15; 25; 35; 45; 55; 65~~) are progressively increased from said central pressurizing portion (~~C₁; C₂; C₃; C₄; C₅~~) toward said end pressurizing portions (~~A₁; A₁'; A₂; A₂'; A₃; A₃'; A₄; A₄'; A₅; A₅'~~) of said shoe press belt (~~11; 21; 31; 41; 51; 61~~) by at least one type of technique among a curve technique, a linear technique, a stepped technique and a trapezoidal technique.

3. (Currently Amended) The shoe press belt according to claim 1, wherein the depths of said drains are so progressively increased that the depth of the deepest drain formed in a pressurizing region (~~A₁; A₁'; A₂; A₂'; A₃; A₃'; A₄; A₄'; A₅; A₅'~~) of said shoe press belt (~~11; 21; 31; 41; 51; 61~~) is 1.05 to 3.0 times the depth of the shallowest drain formed in said pressurizing region.

4. (Currently Amended) The shoe press belt according to claim 1, wherein the thickness of said shoe press belt is progressively reduced from said central pressurizing portion (~~C₁; C₂~~

~~C₃; C₄; C₅~~) toward said end pressurizing portions (~~A₁, A₁'; A₂, A₂'; A₃, A₃'; A₄, A₄'; A₅, A₅'~~) of said shoe press belt.

5. (Currently Amended) A shoe press comprising at least the shoe press belt (~~11; 21; 31; 41; 51; 61~~) according to claim 1, a pressure shoe (~~62~~) applying pressure to said shoe press belt and pressure regulation means (~~63~~) regulating the pressure of said pressure shoe.